

Seattle Police Email Community Newsletter
Jul 30, 2010



Dear Community Friends,

Property Crimes

In Seattle, current property crime rates have increased over previous years. As we pointed out in our June 2010 newsletter, we often see a rise in residential burglaries during warm weather months. This year has proven to be no exception. In many cases, entry into the home is made through an open window (resident left the window open for ventilation but didn't close it before they left the house), or an open front door or garage door while the resident was out of view working in the yard.

Additionally, we've seen a rise in thefts from vehicles. Car prowls are often crimes of opportunity. As is usually the case with car prowls, the thief takes items that are in plain view; items that are left visible inside the car, such as purses, I-Pods and GPS devices.

The good news is that many of these property crimes are avoidable and preventable. Working together, we can reduce incidents of property theft. We want to offer these security reminders and ask that you pass these tips on to friends and neighbors.

Home Security

Always close and lock your windows, limit how far they can be opened.

- We understand the desire to ventilate the home, especially in the summer. But you should always close and lock all windows whenever away from the home - *even if it is for a very short time.*
- If you must leave windows open for ventilation, use ensure they cannot be opened further than 4". Use a dowel for sliding glass windows and sash pins/locks for double hung windows to secure them from being opened further.

Lock your doors

- Install quality dead bolt locks with at least a 1" throw on all exterior doors.
- Replace the existing screws in the strike plates with 3"-4" screws to secure the jamb to the wall stud. When the door is forced open, the jamb will splinter and give instead of the door. When the deadbolt lock is engaged, the bolt goes into the jamb, which becomes secured to the framing of the home. This makes it much more difficult for a person to force open a properly locked door.

Working in the yard

- If working in the backyard, do not leave your front door open and/or unlocked. If you have a garage or storage unit that is out of sight, be mindful of what is in plain view to anyone who may be walking or driving by.
- Be especially careful if you have a connected garage with an entry door into the house that you do not leave your garage open when unattended.

Secure tools and ladders. . .

- . . . so they cannot be used to gain entry into your home or that of a neighbor.

Secure your bicycles

- A number of bicycles are taken each year from open garages, yards and porches of the home. Our evidence room is filled with thousands of bicycles that cannot be returned to their owners because there is no way to identify the bike as belonging to a specific individual. Secure you bicycles with bike locks and engrave them with your driver's license or state ID card number as you would your valuable electronics.

If away for an extended period of time

- If you're going to be away for an extended time, ask a friend or trusted neighbor to watch your home. If they see suspicious activity while you are gone, they will know to call 911 for you.
- Have the post office hold your mail and hold your newspaper delivery.
- Make it appear that your home is occupied. You can do this by having timers set within the home that will turn lights on and off. You may want to consider timers for your exterior lights or photocell attachments that activate when it gets dark and go off when it becomes light.

Vehicle Security

The following are some easy tips to make your vehicle less of a target:

- **Leave No Valuables in Your Car.**
- If you must leave valuables in your car, place items in your car trunk out of sight. Do this when you get to your car, rather than waiting until you park at your next stop.
- If you are out and about and you need to park your vehicle in a lot, choose a lot with good visibility and lines of sight and an attendant present.
- Remember to remove your keys from the ignition and lock your vehicle. This may seem obvious, but many people often forget.
- At home, store your car in a closed and locked garage if possible.
- If your car is stored in a carport or parked near your home, leave exterior lights on throughout the night.
- Don't leave electronic accessories visible in your car. You may have taken the Laptop, GPS or I-Pod with you, but if you leave the USB cables for your laptop, the GPS mounting or earbuds for the I-Pod in plain view, a thief may think those items are in the car.

Operation ID and Engraving - Other Ways to Safeguard Your Valuables



Operation ID is a program for marking your valuables to make them less desirable to steal. Operation ID has two parts: marking all your easily stolen valuables so they can be identified as yours, and; displaying a sticker that tells burglars that you have marked your property.

What makes Operation ID so effective is that easily identified property is hard for a thief to sell. Further, the property can be traced back to you. And, if someone is caught with the property, it's solid evidence of possession of stolen goods. Reformed burglars have said they avoid homes that participate in Operation ID and don't take marked property.

Many times police will take burglary reports from residents who did not know the make, model, or serial number of their stolen property. This makes it difficult to recover their valuables. Often during investigations, police come across property that they know to be stolen, but are unable to trace it to the owners. By using Operation ID, your valuables are traceable back to you from anywhere in the United States.

- Record the item, brand, model and serial number and approximate value on a Personal Property Inventory sheet and make copies of the sheet; one copy should be kept at a secure location outside your home. If you don't have a home safe, put your inventory sheets in a waterproof, sealable plastic pouch and place it in your freezer. In case of a fire, the freezer may be able to withstand destructive flames/heat.
- Use an engraving pen and mark your property with your Driver's License number or State ID card number (**NOT your Social Security number**). Engrave any expensive electronic equipment (televisions, stereos, computers, small electronics, gaming systems). Tools to engrave your property can be purchased at most hardware or craft stores, usually for under \$25.
- For those items that cannot be engraved (such as jewelry, artwork, smaller electronics), take a picture of the item and write a description and approximate value on an inventory list. If you take the picture with a digital camera, remember to remove that particular memory chip and place it somewhere safe (as digital cameras are frequently taken in burglaries and thefts).
- Invisible-ink pens can be used to identify your property. Again, using your driver's license number as an I.D., a simple ultraviolet light on stolen property will show the police who the real owner is.
- Ask the crime prevention coordinator for your area to send you Operation ID decals; post them on your windows near your exterior doors.

Thank you for all you do for your neighborhoods. Take Care and Stay Safe!

Captain David Emerick, South Precinct Commander Captain Jim Dermody, East Precinct Commander
Mark Solomon, Crime Prevention Coordinator